

Profile by Texas Techsan

Introduction

Mac Thornberry was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994. Born and raised in the Texas Panhandle, he is a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Resources Committee. The following article appeared in the February 1997 issue of the Texas Techsan, the alumni magazine of Texas Tech University, from which Mac earned his undergraduate degree in history.

"Mac Thornberry Takes on Washington"

by Nathan Beasley

To understand Mac Thornberry, you've got to visit the ranch. The family ranch, that is. Located in Clarendon, Texas (or seven miles south of Clarendon, to be exact -- which is how it reads on his drivers license), the ranch has been in Thornberry's family for more than 70 years. It's where he grew up, and where, he says, most of his views on politics and the role of government in our society were formed.

The house itself is modest. It was built by Thornberry's grandfather in the 1930s, and is heated by a wood burning stove which sits in the living room. The house is also functional. Just off the kitchen is a door which leads to a corral and stable where the pickup is parked, the horses are kept, and where Thornberry's dog Winston stands guard. This is a working ranch for sure -- one where coming home for the holidays means getting up at dawn to help your Dad feed the cattle.

What's not modest about the Thornberry family house is the view. Coming downstairs in the morning of a bright and clear winter's day means being greeted by a vista that is truly breathtaking to behold. Out the large picture window in the living room, for as far as the eye can see, is the Golden Spread of Texas for which this part of the state is named. There are no buildings, no roadways, no signs of life. Just sheer Texas landscape stretching out in every direction. Gaze out the window long enough and you begin to think you can actually see the curvature of the Earth. You also begin to get a sense of Mac Thornberry's view of politics, and why he believes the federal government has intruded too much into our everyday lives.

"I was taught at a very young age the importance of doing a good job and putting in an honest day's work," Thornberry said. "I also learned how much a person can accomplish if they're just left alone to do it. In many respects, these are two foreign concepts in Washington, where, far too often, words speak louder than action and the easiest way to get something done is to have the federal government do it for you."

Since his election to Congress in 1994, Thornberry has tried to bring a little of his Texas upbringing to our nation's capital. In the process, he has made it his priority to put an end to the business as usual politics which, he says, have resulted in high taxes, a skyrocketing deficit, and an out of control federal bureaucracy that discourages personal responsibility and stifles individual initiative.

In his first two years in office, Thornberry has made his mark as a leader on several issues of importance to the 13th District and the Nation. As a member of the National Security Committee, he is a key figure in ensuring that America's

defense needs are met, and is one of Congress's foremost authorities on keeping the nation's nuclear weapons complex strong and secure. Thornberry also serves on the Resources Committee, where he is a staunch defender of property rights, and is an original cosponsor of legislation that would reform the Endangered Species Act and restore some common sense to the law.

As he begins his second term in office, Thornberry said he hopes to continue the work that was begun over the past two years to balance the budget and shift federal control to states, local communities and individuals. He also plans to charge ahead in trying to reduce the tax burden on working families and businesses.

"Americans today pay more in taxes than at any time in our history. In many families, one of the parents works to pay the bills, while the other parent works to pay the government. This has got to stop. We've got to give people real tax relief that will allow them to spend more of their time with their families, and more of their money on themselves.

"And while we're at it, we've also got to pass real tax reform. We need to scrap the current tax code and replace it with one that's flatter, fairer, and simpler."

In addition to bringing his Texas roots to these and the many other legislative battles that lie ahead, Thornberry also brings with him years of experience which will no doubt help him in the fight. After graduating summa cum laude from Tech in 1980 with a degree in history, he earned a law degree from the University of Texas Law School in 1983. He spent the next several years in Washington working on Capitol Hill, first as Legislative Counsel to former Rep. Tom Loeffler, then as Chief of Staff to Rep. Larry Combest. In 1988, he went to work for the Reagan Administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs.

Thornberry returned to Texas in 1989 to join his brothers in the cattle business and to practice law in Amarillo. Since then, he has taken an active role in the community, having served on the Board of Directors of both the Children's Rehabilitation Center and the High Plains Food Bank. He is also a member of the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association and the First Presbyterian Church of Amarillo.

Thornberry is married to the former Sally Adams, a native of Corpus Christi and former aide to William Bennett in the Department of Education. Married since 1986, Mac and Sally have two children.